

Message Text

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ACTION EB-08

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SUBJECT: MARITIME SATELLITE COMMUNICATIONS - INMARSAT:
SUCCESSOR SYSTEM TO MARISAT

REF: STATE 28836 (NOTAL)

USEEC

1. FOLLOWING THE MEETING OF THE JOINT VENTURE DRAFTING GROUP, FEB. 6-10, REFERRED TO IN REFTEL, LOOKING TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A GLOBAL COMMERCIAL MARITIME COMMUNICATIONS SATELLITE SYSTEM TO FOLLOW THE EXISTING MARISAT SYSTEM, J. B. GANTT OF COMSAT GENERAL DISCUSSED THE MEETING AND RELATED ISSUES WITH THE EMBASSY. MEETING WAS HOSTED BY UK POST OFFICE AND ATTENDED BY REPRESENTATIVES OF BULGARIA, CANADA, FRANCE, JAPAN, KUWAIT, NORWAY, SPAIN, SWEDEN, UK, USSR, COMSAT GENERAL, EUROPEAN SPACE AGENCY (ESA), AND J. S. PARKER OF CIRM AS AN OBSERVER. THE GROUP CAME TOGETHER FOR A FURTHER CONSIDERATION OF THE ESA OFFER FOR THE SALE OF 4 MAROTS SATELLITES TO PROVIDE A SUCCESSOR MARITIME COMMUNICATIONS SATELLITE SYSTEM TO MARISAT. AS WELL, IT DISCUSSED THE LEGAL FORM OF A LIMITED JOINT VENTURE, A DRAFT OF WHICH THE UK

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TABLED AND THE GROUP WORKED OVER.

2. THE JOINT VENTURE HOPEFULLY WOULD ONLY BE INVOLVED IN PROCUREMENT OF THE SYSTEM WHICH IT WOULD PASS OVER TO INMARSAT. HOWEVER, BECAUSE OF THE POSSIBILITY THAT INMARSAT WOULD NOT BE FUNCTIONING BY THE TIME THE NEW SYSTEM WAS OPERATIONAL, IT WAS AGREED THAT THE JOINT

VENTURE WOULD HAVE TO ENCOMPASS THE POSSIBILITY THAT IT WOULD OPERATE THE SYSTEM. AS ENVISIONED THE JOINT VENTURE WOULD HAVE (1) A GOVERNING BOARD; (2) A MANDATED ENTITY-LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE WHICH WOULD HANDLE ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS (THE UK POST OFFICE WOULD LIKE TO ASSUME THIS ROLE AND HAS SOME SUPPORT FROM OTHER COUNTRIES); GENERAL WOULD HANDLE THIS ACTIVITY AS THEY HAVE UP UNTIL NOW FOR INTELSAT SINCE GREAT IMPORTANCE WAS PLACED ON THE SYSTEM MANAGER PROVIDING SMOOTH CONTINUITY BETWEEN MARISAT AND THE NEW SYSTEM SO THAT THE MARITIME INDUSTRY WOULD NOT FEEL ANY GAP). THE GROUP WANTED A SECRETARIAT FOR THE BOARD, BUT WITH THE EXAMPLE OF INTELSAT BEFORE THEM, COMSAT GENERAL AND THE UK PROPOSED THAT THE SECRETARIAT FUNCTION BE PERFORMED BY THE MANDATED ENTITY. THE DRAFT AGREEMENT INCLUDES THE PEACEFUL PURPOSES LANGUAGE FROM THE INMARSAT AGREEMENT. THE ONLY DISCORDANT POLITICAL NOTE WAS THE USSR OPPOSITION TO INCLUSION OF THE NON-DISCRIMINATORY USE LANGUAGE IN THE AGREEMENT.

3. THE FULL ESA OFFER WILL BE IN THE HANDS OF ALL PARTICIPANTS BY THE END OF MARCH. ESA WANTS A DEFINITIVE RESPONSE AT THE APRIL 10-14 CONFERENCE TO BE HELD IN BOURNEMOUTH, ENGLAND, BUT GANTT SEES JUNE-JULY PERIOD AS PROBABLE TIME WHEN A DECISION WILL BE MADE. UK IS GOING TO TRY TO ACCOMMODATE US GOVERNMENT DIFFICULTY WITH THE WORD "NEGOTIATE" IN CONNECTION WITH THE APRIL CONFERENCE, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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AS A USEFUL TIME TO CONSIDER IN FULL THE ESA OFFER. HOWEVER, HE SAYS THAT HE MADE EXTREMELY CLEAR TO THE OTHER PARTICIPANTS THAT COMSAT GENERAL IS CONSIDERING THREE ALTERNATIVES: (1) THE ESA OFFER; (2) A SECOND GENERATION MARISAT WHICH WOULD MEET BOTH US NAVY AND COMMERCIAL MARITIME REQUIREMENTS; AND (3) THE RECENT INTELSAT OFFER TO INCLUDE A MARITIME PACKAGE ON ITS LAST THREE SERIES V SATELLITES. THE INTELSAT PROPOSAL COULD BE MERGED WITH USE OF TWO MAROTS SATELLITES.

4. THE CANADIANS (M. L. CARD, ROY M. DOHOO, AND I. MC CALLUM) ALSO STATED AT THE MEETING THAT THEY WOULD HAVE TO GIVE FULL CONSIDERATION TO THE VARIOUS ALTERNATIVES. THEY TOLD GANTT PRIVATELY THAT THE CANADIAN GOVERNMENT WAS POSSIBLY INTERESTED IN SHARING FACILITIES OF A SECOND GENERATION MARISAT SYSTEM FOR COMMUNICATIONS IN THE FAR NORTH AND CERTAIN DEFENSE NEEDS. THEY INDICATED THAT THEY WOULD BE GOING TO WASHINGTON TO DISCUSS THE POSSIBILITY WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE.

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